



Driving Under-the-Influence (DUI) Frequently Asked Questions

How serious is the problem?

Drunk driving is the most frequently committed crime in the United States. In 1999, approximately 1.55 million drivers were arrested for driving under-the-influence of alcohol or narcotics.

It is estimated that alcohol and other drugs are a factor in 45 percent of all fatal automobile accidents and one-fifth of all accidents involving injury. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reported that in 2000, 41,821 people were killed on our nation's highways; 40 percent of these fatalities involved alcohol. Alcohol-related injuries continue to be a serious threat to both drivers and passengers on the road. In 2000, over 300,000 people in the United States suffered injuries in alcohol-related crashes.

About 3 in every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives. An alcohol-related motor vehicle crash kills someone every 33 minutes and injures someone every 2 minutes. Traffic crashes are the greatest single cause of death for every age between the ages of 6 and 27. Almost half of these fatalities are a result of alcohol.

Beyond the tragedy of lost lives and painful recovery from injuries, alcohol-related accidents exact a huge economic cost. In 1998, the financial costs associated with alcohol-related crashes in the U.S. were estimated at \$110 billion annually in monetary and quality of life costs.

How does the DUI problem impact young people?

The alcohol-related traffic fatality rate for youth has been cut by over half since 1988. However, youth are still over represented in fatal crashes compared to the older population. One-third of all deaths of people aged 15-20 years are caused by motor vehicle crashes, and more than 35 percent of those fatalities are alcohol related. In 2000, 2,339 youth died in alcohol-related crashes.

Trends

Since 1982, annual alcohol-related traffic deaths have been reduced by 37%. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that between 90,307 and 128,520 lives have been saved between 1983 and 1996 due to the decrease in alcohol involvement in fatal crashes in the United States. From 1990 to 2000, the youth alcohol-related fatality rate has been cut from 16 to 10 deaths per 100,000 youth. Drinking and driving is no longer the leading cause of death for teenagers, however, motor vehicle crashes remain so.

What are the penalties for DUI?

Fines/Penalties

.....approximately \$300 - \$5,000

Jail/Community Service

..... 2 days to 2 years

DUI Treatment Program

..... 3, 18, or 30 months

Drivers License Suspension

.....4 months to 5 years

How much does a DUI Cost?

Costs for DUI have been estimated to be more than \$5,540. (Actual costs may vary. This amount does not include attorney fees or lost wages due to court appearances.) Here is a conservative itemized breakdown for a first DUI offense:

Fines/Penalties	\$1500
Tow/Impound Fee.....	190
DUI Treatment Program	550
Insurance Increase.....	2,700
Restitution Fund.....	500
DMV Reissue Fee.....	100
<i>Total Approximate Cost:</i>	<i>\$5,540</i>

How much alcohol does it take to impair driving?

This depends on several factors:

- Your Weight. It takes less alcohol to become intoxicated if you weigh 120 pounds than if you weigh 180 pounds.
- Whether you are drinking on a full or empty stomach. It takes less time to get intoxicated if you drink on an empty stomach.
- How many drinks you have and their alcohol content.
- How long you have been drinking.
- Whether you are taking any medicines or drugs, which may combine with alcohol to increase the effect of alcohol on your driving ability.

What is blood alcohol concentration (BAC)?

Blood Alcohol Concentration is a measure of the amount of alcohol in the blood stream expressed as a percentage. The illegal BAC level in California is set at .08 percent. A person weighing 150 pounds, drinking at the rate of 1.5 ounces of alcohol (the approximate amount found in one 12-ounce can of beer or one glass of wine) per half hour, would need:

Two drinksto reach a BAC of 0.05%
Three drinks.....to reach a BAC of nearly 0.08%
Four drinks.....to reach a BAC of 0.10%
Six drinks.....to reach a BAC of 0.15%

Is it safe to drive after drinking modest amounts of alcohol?

Just a drink or two can make someone behind the wheel a threat to themselves and to others. Drinking alcohol affects a driver's coordination, reaction time, and vision (particularly at night). Long before any outward signs of impairment are recognized, the driver's judgment, emotions, and confidence are adversely affected. Even at a BAC as low as .02 percent, alcohol affects driving ability and crash likelihood. The probability of crash begins to increase significantly at .05 percent BAC and climbs rapidly after about .08 percent BAC.

What is "Admin per se?"

"Admin per se" refers to a relatively new procedure, administrative license suspension, in which a driver's license may be taken before conviction when a driver fails or refuses to take a chemical test for alcohol. As of 2000, 41 states including Washington, D.C. had administrative license suspension laws. In California a driver's license is suspended for four months on a first offense, and one year for a second offense.

When do most DUIs occur?

Most DUIs occur at night (9 p.m. to 6 a.m.). Sixty-nine percent of the drivers of nighttime single vehicle fatal crashes had BAC levels of .10 percent or more. Only 21 percent had no alcohol in their blood. Thirty percent of all fatal crashes during the week were alcohol-related, compared to 53 percent on weekends. Most youth alcohol-related fatalities occurred in June and July.